

Sample Outline of Employee Handbook

I. INTRODUCTION AND EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS

Instill a sense of pride, trust and fairness by using language that creates a positive image for your business. Examples include the following: a letter from the CEO, the company history, organizational charts, welcoming comments, mission statements, philosophies, top priorities, statements as to why employees are important and how they make a difference, etc.

II. WORKPLACE POLICIES

- A. Policy Statements such as those concerning Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), AIDS, Sexual Harassment, American with Disabilities Act (ADA), Affirmative Action, etc.
- B. Work Rule Policies regarding areas such as—dress codes, attendance, scheduling, travel, smoking, parking, tardiness, substance abuse, telephone usage, uniforms, name tags, vehicle usage, safety, accident reporting, confidentiality, outside employment, use of business equipment, security/loss prevention, housekeeping requirements for work areas, food/drink in work areas, etc.

III. EMPLOYER POLICIES

- A. Employee Categories—definitions of various categories (i.e., temporary, part time, full time, salaried, exempt, non-exempt, etc. and your requirements such as probationary periods, number of hours worked to qualify, etc).
- B. Hours Worked—define work week as well as policies concerning shift work, break and meal periods, flexible working hours, overtime, pay periods, scheduling, travel, etc.
- C. Hiring, Promotion and Layoff Policies
- D. Employee Conduct Standards
- E. Personnel Records—describe what they contain, where kept, if open to the employee and under what conditions.
- F. Performance Evaluations—how performance will be appraised, how frequently and by whom.
- G. Training Policies and Procedures
- H. Drug Testing Procedures (if allowed by law)
- I. Discipline Procedures—define various forms of discipline, including verbal warning, written warning, suspension, disciplinary probation, demotion and termination. Be cautious of listing possible offenses and expected punishment as they may lock you into a particular response.
- J. Grievance Procedures—if an employer maintains a written internal procedure, the employee must first exhaust those procedures prior to filing an action under the Wrongful Discharge Act. (The employer must provide the discharged employee a copy of those procedures within 7

days of the date of discharge). An established grievance procedure can be an effective tool for minimizing claims of wrongful discharge.

IV. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Describe your benefits as well as any required employee contributions and/or eligibility requirements. Seek expert advice as these can afford important contractual benefits and are often the subject of dispute and litigation.

Have a conspicuous disclaimer in easily understood language that states that your employee handbook is not intended to encompass all company policies and procedures and stating that you reserve the sole discretion to change, cancel, amend or make exceptions.

Obtain a signed, dated acknowledgement of receipt of your employee handbook from each employee for your personnel files as well as sign-offs on amendments and updates. These statements should say that they have received, read and understand the information.

Two important cautions when developing company policies:

1. Be sure to consult applicable bargaining agreements.
2. Be sure your policies do not violate any existing employment laws.

Seek legal advice before finalizing your handbook. You don't want a document that will tie your hands or weaken a court case because of wording.